**1. In the space below, describe the stasis at the beginning of Trifles. In other words, “Where are we?” “When is it (time, day, and year)?” “Who are the people involved?” “What is the dramatic situation in which the characters find themselves as the play unfolds?”**

-In the beginning of Trifles, the audience is placed in the kitchen of an abandoned farm house in rural Iowa in the middle of winter in the year 1916. We are introduced to the impatient, interrupting county attorney, the investigative sheriff, and Mr. Hale, the first to come into contact with Mrs. Wright after the murder of Mr. Wright. The men search for clues surrounding the murder while they tell Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters to keep busy while they do “men’s work”.

**2. What is the intrusion that causes the stasis to be broken and the dramatic action to develop, often at an increasingly rapid pace, to the end of the play?**

-The first intrusion occurs at the very beginning of the text, when the introduction of characters to the scene breaks the eerie, mysterious stasis of the abandoned kitchen. The next major stasis occurs when Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale are left alone to collect Mrs. Wright’s things around the kitchen while the men search the rest of the house. Rather than looking for evidence to use against her, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters look for answers to the murder mystery. **3. Why do the events of the play take place at this particular time and place? In other words, what is the unique factor which is out of the ordinary that causes a turn of events to take place?**

**-**The events that take place are only possible because of the status of women at the time this play takes place. The women’s suffrage movement had not yet begun to take place and were often seen as inferior when it came to taking on more serious tasks. Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters are left alone in the kitchen to discover the dead bird because the men don’t want them getting too cold or bothered in the harsh winter weather. The kitchen is where they are needed, to tidy up the mess that was left. **4. State the dramatic question or questions that must be answered by the end of the play? (Ordinarily, the dramatic question shares a close connection with the intrusion.)**

**-**How will Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters react to the limits placed on their abilities?

-Who ends up finding stronger evidence and how? **5. Use Ms. Hale to answer the questions concerning character. Ball says, a character is revealed by what he/she does, that is the dramatic actions that are taken. Examine what the character wants (NOTE: In Trifles the wants of Ms. Hale change as the play progresses). The wants of a character often encounter obstacles that get in the way of achieving those wants. Ball says there are 4 kinds of obstacles that frustrate the wants of a character. They are: a. Me against myself, b. Me against another individual, c. Me against society (that is law, social norms, etc.) and, d. Me against fate, the universe, natural forces, God or the gods. In answering these questions be sure to point to the particular obstacles that demonstrate these obstacles for Ms. Hale.**

**-**Mrs. Hale is introduced in the play as a typical early 20th century homemaker, tidying up what Mrs. Wright left out and talking about the fixtures with Mrs. Peters as they go along. However, as she continues to clean, Mrs. Hale begins to analyze what would’ve brought Mrs. Wright to this point of “insanity” in the first place. She begins to reflect on her relationship with Mrs. Wright and blames herself for not visiting more often and making more of an effort to make her feel included. This reflection is a me against myself conflict that she faces while scoping the room. Unlike the sheriff and attorney, Mrs. Hale wants to help Mrs. Wright in any way she can instead of looking for evidence specifically against her. Her wants lead to a series of dramatic actions including, covering up the sewing mistakes and hiding the dead bird in her pocket. Mrs. Hale also faces the obstacle of me vs. society, overcoming the preconceived notion that women will be no use in an investigation of this manner. **6. The most important information in most plays takes place during theatrical moments. Identify the most theatrical moments in Trifles.**

**-** The most theatrical moments in Trifles occurs when the first piece of hard evidence is uncovered by Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters toward the end of the play. An empty and tampered with cage is discovered, but there is no recollection of the Wrights having a cat that could’ve eaten the bird, and the women conclude that it’s improbable that Mr. Wright would’ve been fond of having a bird in the first place since he killed the birdlike, bubbly personality his wife once had. When the bird is discovered, it’s a race to hide the evidence from the men before they come back into the kitchen. The audience sees the scrambling of the women and the men approaching the door and turning the knob all in a matter of seconds. **7. Provide at least three examples of images in Trifles. How does the title of the play help us understand the images in the play? (Remember Ball says that, “An image is the use of something we know that tells us something we don’t know.” He goes on to say that images invoke and expand, rather than define and limit.”)**

**-**knotting in the sewing: the silly little “trifles” that women are faced with make it possible for Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters to notice the slipups in the sewing, an activity they’re familiar with. The knotting may also be referencing the knotting of a rope that would be used around someone’s neck.

-the rocking chair: a thing that women would do their busy work in, but now Mrs. Wright suddenly takes on value as an individual because of her possible homicide. No one in the town paid much attention to Mrs. Wright until now, and now a piece of furniture of little value takes on a matter of importance.

-the bundle of cherries: Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters are the only characters that find any value in the rotting fruit because they know the kind of labor it takes to tend to them during the warm seasons. While the men would throw them out without a second thought, the women’s care of the fruit highlights how different things can take on different amounts of value to certain people, **8. Ordinarily, there are many themes in most plays. List the themes in Trifles.**

**-**Breaking stereotypes

-Analyzing abilities

-Reflection of self

-Realizing independence **9. Most American plays have something to do with family and/or family relationships. What does family have to do with Trifles? Is family redefined in Trifles?**

**-**the husband/wife relationship is highlighted in Trifles by examining the dynamics of the Wrights and what would prompt a wife to supposedly kill her husband. When talking about Mrs. Wright, Mrs. Hale refers to her as Minnie Foster, her name before she was married, to admire her spirit and mannerisms before marriage changed her to fit the typical farm town wife mold. The county attorney in particular pokes fun at a wife’s duties and solidifies her place in society. While it is not explicitly stated, family relations between husbands and wives could be behind the story’s mystery.